

Forum addresses future of health care

WHEATFIELD: *Regional initiative stops at senior center.*

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WHEATFIELD — A regional initiative aimed at gathering input on the future of health care stopped at the Wheatfield Senior Center Friday to see what matters most to the town's aging population.

Many of the approximately 60 seniors who attended the forum said they want health care 10 years from now to:

- Have lower prescription and co-pay costs

- Conduct all health care procedures in one location on the same day, rather than having to go to multiple sites

- To have health care decisions made by doctors, not health insurance provider executives

- Have closer proximity to specialized care

Friday's forum — called 1 Friday, 4 Futures — was one of more than 30 that have been held in areas rural to urban and across all demographics throughout the eight counties of Western New York.

"The goal of the project is to get your feedback on the health care system, and we want to bring that information to policy makers," Nicole Waheed, director of outreach and media for the Community Health Center of Buffalo, told the audience.

She said the project has received different feedback in each town and city in which it has stopped. In urban areas, the key concern is affordable health care, while in rural areas such as Wheatfield, residents want better proximity to services.

Participants in the 1 Friday, 4 Futures forums complete

surveys after the session which will be used by the University at Buffalo Regional Institute to compile a report in the fall.

Congress needs to do something about the health care issue, Waheed said. "They need to listen to what these people are saying. Their values are important, too. It shouldn't be about the bottom line."

Many at the Senior Center agreed. Donna Cederman said she's concerned about quality of care. "Why would I want (to see) a physician's assistant when they charge exactly the same as the physician, and I'm sure the education is not (the same)?"

At each site they visit, participants are given a 1 Friday, 4 Futures book, which contains four stories that are read aloud. Each story occurs on the same date — June 22, 2018 — but with far different scenarios, the goal

being that participants talk about what they like and dislike about each one.

The situations range from the bleakness caused by several economic recessions to a time when Congress passes sweeping health care reform, paving the way for universal access. For example, the first story focused on a man named Barry Glover, who was laid off from his job as a result of the recession and is about to have his leg amputated because he couldn't afford insulin for his diabetes.

It represents a future in which hospitals are short-staffed and health care favors the rich.

"Is that something you can see health care looking like in the future?" Waheed asked after the story. "It already is," many of the seniors said.

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